

Message Text

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TAGS: CASC, UR (DAVIDSON, DR. SOLOMON M.)

SUBJECT: DETENTION OF DR. AND MRS. SOLOMON M. DAVIDSON

1. BEGIN SUMMARY. TWO AMERICAN CITIZENS RUINED THEIR CHRISTMAS VACATION IN THE SOVIET UNION WHEN THEY RAN AFOUL OF LENINGRAD AIRPORT AUTHORITIES ON DECEMBER 24 BECAUSE OF VIOLATING SOVIET CUSTOMS REGULATIONS. END SUMMARY.

2. AMCITS DR. AND MRS. SOLOMON M. DAVIDSON, PERMANENTLY RESIDING 5200 SHRIVER AVENUE, DES MOINES, IOWA, 50312, TRAVELING WITH NATIONAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION TOUR GROUP, WERE DETAINED AT LENINGRAD AIRPORT BY SOVIET CUSTOMS OFFICIALS EVENING DECEMBER 24. ABOUT 20 RELIGIOUS BOOKS AND PAMPHLETS IN RUSSIAN AND HEBREW WERE FOUND IN DAVIDSONS' LUGGAGE AND CONFISCATED BY SOVIET AUTHORITIES. DAVIDSONS REFUSED TO ALLOW BODY SEARCH WITHOUT FIRST CONSULTING WITH CONGEN OFFICER, BUT CUSTOMS AUTHORITIES REFUSED GRANT PERMISSION TO CALL CONGEN. CONSOFF FIRST NOTIFIED OF DAVIDSONS' SITUATION BY TOUR GROUP LEADER FROM DOWNTOWN HOTEL ABOUT TWO HOURS AFTER INCIDENT BEGAN. AFTER OBTAINING STATUS REPORT BY PHONE FROM AIRPORT INTOURIST PERSONNEL, CONSOFF PROCEEDED TO AIRPORT.

3. UPON ARRIVAL, CONSOFF PROTESTED FACT THAT DAVIDSONS HAD NOT BEEN ALLOWED CONTACT CONGEN, IN VIOLATION OF CONSULAR CONVENTION. SENIOR CUSTOMS OFFICER ON DUTY EXPLAINED THAT

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DAVIDSONS "HAD NOT YET ENTERED USSR" SINCE THEY HAD NOT YET

CLEARED CUSTOMS AND, IN ANY EVENT, AUTHORITIES "ASSUMED" THAT SOMEONE IN GROUP, WHICH HAD GONE TO HOTEL SEVERAL HOURS EARLIER, WOULD CONTACT CONGEN. AFTER LENGTHY DISCUSSION WITH DAVIDSONS, DURING WHICH THEY REVEALED THEY CARRYING SEVERAL ARTICLES AND PAMPHLETS CRITICAL OF TREATMENT OF SOVIET JEWS AS WELL AS LIST OF SUSPECTED KGB INFORMANTS AMONG SOVIET JEWISH COMMUNITY, DAVIDSONS DECIDED NOT TO UNDERGO BODY SEARCH AND TO LEAVE USSR ON NEXT AVAILABLE FLIGHT.

4. UPON CONVEYING DAVIDSONS' WISHES TO SENIOR CUSTOMS OFFICIAL, CONSOFF WAS TOLD THAT DAVIDSONS MUST UNDERGO SEARCH IN ANY CASE SINCE THEY HAD ALREADY PASSED IMMIGRATION CHECKPOINT. THEREFORE, THEY "HAD ENTERED USSR" AND SUBJECT TO CUSTOMS SEARCH BEFORE LEAVING. AT THIS POINT, CONSOFF POINTED OUT INCONSISTENCY OF SOVIET POSITION AND FORMALLY REQUESTED THAT DAVIDSONS BE ALLOWED TO DEPART WITHOUT SEARCH. CONSOFF STATED THAT CONTINUED INSISTENCE OF CUSTOMS AUTHORITIES ON SEARCH WOULD REQUIRE RAISING MATTER WITH DIPLOMATIC AGENCY IMMEDIATELY. (IT WAS ALREADY AFTER 1:00 A.M. DECEMBER 25.) AFTER CIRCA 45 MINUTE CONSULTATION BETWEEN SENIOR CUSTOMS, IMMIGRATION AND AIRPORT OFFICIALS ON DUTY, SOVIET AUTHORITIES FINALLY BACKED DOWN FROM INITIAL POSITION AND ALLOWED DAVIDSONS RETURN WITHOUT BODY SEARCH TO ARRIVAL AREA BEHIND IMMIGRATION CHECKPOINT. LITERATURE ORIGINALLY CONFISCATED FROM THEM WAS NOT RETURNED. AFTER TRANSLATION PROVIDED BY AIRPORT OFFICIAL AND VERIFIED BY CONSOFF, DAVIDSONS AGREED TO SIGN STATEMENT ACKNOWLEDGING CONFISCATION. DAVIDSONS SPENT NIGHT ON SOFA AND WERE HELD VIRTUALLY INCOMMUNICADO, EXCEPT FOR OBTAINING MEALS PROVIDED FOR THEM BY INTOURIST.

5. UNFORTUNATELY, ONLY THURSDAY FLIGHT TO WEST (FINNAIR TO HELSINKI) CANCELLED DUE CHRISTMAS HOLIDAYS AND DAVIDSONS FORCED SPEND NIGHT OF DECEMBER 25/26 IN SAME ARRIVAL AREA. CONSOFF PROVIDED BLANKETS AND PILLOWS FOR THEM, ENSURED THEY STILL HAD ACCESS TO MEALS, AND ASSISTED WITH THEIR DEPARTURE ON FIRST AVAILABLE FLIGHT (TO STOCKHOLM) MORNING DECEMBER 26. DAVIDSONS PLANNED TRAVEL TO HELSINKI TO REJOIN TOUR GROUP THERE FOR RETURN TO U.S. FOLLOWING WEEK.

6. ACCORDING TO STATEMENTS OF BOTH TOUR GROUP LEADERS AND DAVIDSONS, THEY HAD BEEN BRIEFED AND WARNED IN ADVANCE ABOUT LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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SOVIET CUSTOMS INSPECTION AND WHAT ITEMS CONSIDERED CONTRABAND BY SOVIET AUTHORITIES. DAVIDSONS CLAIMED THAT LITERATURE CONFISCATED FROM LUGGAGE WAS FOR PERSONAL USE, BUT ADMITTED NEITHER SPOKE OR READ RUSSIAN. DAVIDSONS ADMITTED TO CONSOFF THEY DID NOT EXPECT TO BE CONFRONTED WITH BODY SEARCH.

7. ALTHOUGH DAVIDSONS KNOWINGLY VIOLATED SOVIET REGULATIONS REGARDING IMPORT OF RELIGIOUS LITERATURE, WE ARE SUBMITTING

NOTE TO DIPLOMATIC AGENCY PROTESTING ACTION OF AIRPORT CUSTOMS
AUTHORITIES IN DENYING DAVIDSON'S RIGHT TO CONTACT CONGEN.
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